# Chapter 4

## Identification of Students

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will focus on how to identify the students that will be served in your district's program. Using the definition of high ability agreed upon by your community, it is now the task to create a means of identifying students which is consistent with the program philosophy and definition of high ability or giftedness.

There are certain "best practices" that must be observed no matter what program is developed. These can help ensure that all students with needs will be found.

1. Focus should be on diversity within gifted populations. The gifted are not a homogeneous group nor do they express their talents in the same way.
2. The goal should be inclusion rather then exclusion.
3. Data should be gathered from multiple sources; a single criterion of giftedness should be avoided.
4. Both objective and subjective data should be used.
5. Professionals and nonprofessionals who represent various areas of expertise and who are knowledgeable about behavioral indicators of giftedness should be involved.
6. Identification should occur as early as possible and should be continuous.
7. Special attention should be given to the different ways in which children from different cultures manifest behavioral indicators of giftedness.
8. Decision making should be delayed until all pertinent data on a student has been reviewed.
9. Data collected during the identification process should be used to help determine the individual child's curriculum.

—Dr. Mary Frasier

*Intelligence is quickness in seeing things as they are.*
*—Geroge Santayana*

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR MEASURING POTENTIAL TALENT

Three factors must be considered during the process of talent finding: test data, performance data, and developmental data. Each plays its own part in finding talent and identifying the needs to be served by the program.

## TEST DATA

A variety of instruments are available. Considerations must be made to select instruments that will effectively screen the talent your program is being planned to serve.

## PERFORMANCE DATA

This data is collected to demonstrate the student's accomplishments both in and out of school. It includes the student's school records and any skills or products the student has developed inside or outside of school.

*Screening is the ongoing process used to find all high-ability students in need of services.*

## DEVELOPMENTAL DATA

This data comes from a variety of sources both inside the school (teachers, counselors, other staff) and from the community and family. It supports the test and performance data to suggest that this student is "ahead" of his/her age peers and helps define programming needs.

## SCREENING AND PREASSESSMENT: FINDING POTENTIAL TALENT

Screening is the ongoing process used to find all high-ability students in need of services. It is important that we "cast the net" as widely as possible to assure that we "catch" all high-ability students; both those achieving at a high level and those who may not be at present. Materials commonly used in the screening process are:

test data—

group aptitude and achievement tests normally used by your district

- the recommendation is to include all students scoring one standard deviation above the mean

performance and developmental data—

- cumulative records, student portfolios, student products and performances, plus observations by teachers, other professionals, parents, the community, and peers

Preassessment in the screening process may also involve designing and implementing appropriate activities that highlight student's abilities in order to establish an educational need. These may include specialized lessons, projects or other activities establishing educational need or designed to indicate the potential for performing at high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of their age, experience, or environment.

## FORMAL ASSESSMENT: MEASURING POTENTIAL TALENT

Formal assessment involves using measures to establish the educational potential and needs of the individual students which your program will serve. Instruments and other indicators should be chosen whose results reflect and support the program goals and philosophy for which your program is designed. Both objective and subjective measures should be used.

*If some degree of subjectivity cannot be tolerated, then our definition of giftedness and the resulting programs will logically be limited to abilities that can only be measured by objective tests —Renzulli, J.S. What makes giftedness: Reexamining a definition. Phi Delta Kappan, 60, p.181)*

It is increasingly evident that subjective evaluation is vital if we are to achieve an equitable program free of bias. Subjective measures include both performance and developmental data. Well-designed and research-based subjective measures should be given equal consideration when compared with objective measures in the identification of high-ability students.

Several observation instruments have been developed and researched. They are providing reliable results that tend to be bias free plus help to educate the observer as to the traits of the high-ability students.

Dr. Mary Fraxier, director of the University of Georgia National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented, has formulated a method for identifying gifted children from varying cultural and economic groups. Integrated throughout this systematic apprach are ten Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (TABs) which have been found through research to be consistently associated with the psychological construct of giftedness.

The ten TABs are Motivation, Interests, Communication Skills, Problem-Solving Ability, Memory, Inquiry, Insight, Reasoning, Imagination/Creativity, and Humor. These TABs serve as the basis for referral, assessment, creation of the individual student profile, and recommendations for meeting the student's needs. An important component of this approach is the consideration that the TABs may be manifested differently among differing cultural or economic groups.

The Research-Based Assessment plan was developed primarily as a means of finding and identifying a greater number of gifted students among traditionally underserved groups; however, its application as a means of equitably identifying gifted children from all groups of the general population merits serious consideration and thorough investigation.

A problem-solving based model was developed and is being tested by Dr. C. June Maker in the Southwest. It relies on the observation of problem-solving abilities in defined problem situations. This method is also culturally non-biased (Maker, 1992).

In the past, students were not identified until they were about eight years old. This practice may cause problems for high-ability students whose needs are not being met in the early years of school.

The Kingore Observation Inventory (KOI) is an observation instrument which is used by classroom teachers to note the behaviors of K-3 high-ability students over a sixweek period of time. It also serves as a curriculum-wide instructional focus in providing programs which accent the behaviors characteristic of gifted youth (Kingore, 1992).

*Using the collected data the instructional team determines the student's needs for additional programming. This team, which includes involved staff, parents, and the student (if mature enough to participate), will develop the student's Individual Learning Plan.*

The Early Assessment for Exceptional Potential Portfolio Process (Shaklee, 1989) for grades K-3 relies on multiple sources of data (six types of verbal and non-verbal) from a minimum of four persons who know the child well. The data is collected over a 12-week time frame. Shaklee's research indicated that teachers believe that the portfolios have a lot more weight than tests. Her research also indicated that the teachers have made a major shift in blending instruction and management. The teachers perceive themselves as having developed more child-centered classrooms which relieves them of a dictatorial role (Shaklee, 1992).

## FINAL PLACEMENT OF THE STUDENT

Using the collected data the instructional team determines the student's needs for additional programming. This team, which includes involved staff, parents, and the student (if mature enough to participate), will develop the student's Individual Learning Plan. All of the data collected for evaluation should be used to design a plan to meet the student's educational needs.

Students included in the screening, but not formally placed, obviously have educational needs which are not being met. A plan should be devised to meet these needs.

## ACTION STEPS

In summary, the components of a quality identification document are:

I. Philosophy Statement

- A. Agree on a definition of high-ability students to be served by the program
- B. Define your program based on the theoretical model your community chooses and meets the needs of the students your community has committed to serve

II. The Identification Process

- A. Decide on ages and areas of ability to be identified
- B. Define procedure to be used and the rationale for use
- C. Select instruments to be used and the rationale for use
- D. Understand the limitations of the instruments and the procedure
- E. Prescribe the steps of the identification process
  1. Preassessment /Screening
     - a. Existing Records (cumulative file, portfolio, student products)
     - b. Group Tests (recommendation of one standard deviation above the mean, Borland, p.101)
     - c. Referrals from teachers, parents, and the student using an instrument that finds the behaviors your program is designed to support
  2. Form a Candidate Pool
     - a. Additional testing of the aptitudes the program is designed to support (e.g., individual intelligence testing)
     - b. Exposure to enrichment activities
  3. Final Placement of the Student
     - a. Selection Formula (<u>weighted matrices are NOT recommended</u>)
     - b. Selection committee composed of classroom teachers, teachers for the program for high-ability students, administrators, psychologists, program coordinators and possibly school board members, parents, and students using a case study approach recommends a plan to meet the student's needs

*The correlation between IQ and achievement is about 0.60. While this is a high correlation, it is not absolute. This correlation means that about one-third of what is measured by achievement tests can be attributed to intelligence. The other two-thirds can be attributed to motivation, interest, background, and other factors.*
*—Clasen, Robert E. and Donna R. Clasen, <u>Gifted and Talented Students: a Step by Step Approach to Programming</u>, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 1987, p.5).*

4. Procedure for meeting needs of students not formally identified.

5. Procedure for Evaluation of Identification Process

For information, analysis and evaluation of instruments used in the identification of gifted students or in the evaluation of gifted programs, contact:

The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented
Data Base Requests
Curry School of Education
405 Emmet Street
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22903
TEL (804)982-2849

## For more information on identification of students:

Kingore, Bertie W., The Kingore Observation Inventory, Leadership Publishers, Inc. , P.O. Box 8358, Des Moines, Iowa 50301, 1990

Maker, C. June, "Intelligence and Creativity in Multiple Intelligences: Identification and Development," Educating Able Learners, Fall 1992, pp.12-19

Shaklee, Beverly D., "Early Assessment for Exceptional Potential in Young Minority and/or Economically Disadvantaged Students," Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, 1992 Preliminary Findings reported at Javits Conference, December 1992, Washington, D.C.

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